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Little Wood Rail *Aramides mangle*, a Brazilian endemic, found in French Guiana

by Johan Ingels, Maxime Dechelle & Rasmus Bøgh

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Little Wood Rail *Aramides mangle* is the smallest (*c.*30 cm) of the seven Neotropical *Aramides* species. It occurs in coastal eastern Brazil between approximately 00°S and 25°S, i.e. from north-east Pará to south-east Paraná (Taylor & van Perlo 1998). An early claim of its occurrence as far north as Guyana lacked evidence (Burmeister 1856), and following Peters (1934) and Hellmayr & Conover (1942) subsequent authors have considered Little Wood Rail as a Brazilian endemic (Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Taylor 1996, Taylor & van Perlo 1998).

Figure 1. Little Wood Rail *Aramides mangle*, Kourou River, Kourou, French Guiana, 10 July 2010 (Maxime Dechelle)

A. mangle occurs in dense coastal mangroves, swamps and nearby forest, although it also occurs inland, with records from humid highland forest in the Serra do Mar and northern Ceará, and in dense *caatinga*, sometimes far from water, in the interior from Ceará to Bahia (Sick 1993, Taylor 1996, Taylor & van Berlo 1998, Albano & Girão 2008, Redies 2010). However, it is uncertain if the species is resident in the Caatinga, or whether it departs in the dry season, as this wood rail probably undertakes local migrations (Sick 1993, Redies 2010).

Just one species of *Aramides* is known in French Guiana. Grey-necked Wood Rail *A. cajanea* is a large wood rail (*c.*40 cm), widespread but local in marshy areas and along creeks in lowland forest. Its head to upper mantle and breast is grey, and there is a faint to distinct rufous patch on the occiput (Tostain *et al.* 1992, Taylor 1996, Taylor & van Perlo 1998). Undocumented records of the small Rufous-necked Wood Rail *A. axillaris* (Tostain *et al.* 1992) are now considered unreliable and the species is excluded from the avifauna of French Guiana by the Comité d'Homologation de Guyane (CHG) (O. Claessens & A. Renaudier pers. comm.). *A. axillaris* is only slightly larger than Little Wood Rail, and its head, neck and ventral plumage are typically bright chestnut.

On 10 July 2010 at 10.47 h, MD photographed a wood rail (Fig. 1) foraging at low tide in mangrove along the Kourou River near the port in the centre of Kourou (05°09'N, 52°39'W), *c.*1 km from the Atlantic coast. MD identified the bird as a Grey-necked Wood Rail, but when RB saw the photographs, he identified it as *A. mangle*, which was confirmed by JI. Little Wood Rail differs from all congeners in having a red base to the maxilla, and in the grey hindneck and rufous lower foreneck. These are the main diagnostic characters for identification. Moreover, rufous on the belly extending to the lower breast and therefore not forming a clear-cut 'band' distinguishes it from Grey-necked Wood Rail. The record was validated by the CHG as the first documented record of Little Wood Rail for French Guiana and the Guiana Shield (O. Claessens & A. Renaudier pers. comm.).

The discovery of Little Wood Rail so far north of the Amazon was most unexpected. The distance along the Atlantic coast between its northernmost Brazilian locality, Vista Alegre do Pará, near Marapanim (00°39'S, 47°45'W) in extreme north-east Pará (Novaes 1981), and Kourou at 05°N in French Guiana, is *c.*900 km. Further observations are needed to establish whether resident populations of Little Wood Rail occur in Amapá (Brazil) and French Guiana, or whether this bird was a vagrant. The latter hypothesis seems more likely, considering the species' known range. If so, the occurrence of a Little Wood Rail so far from its breeding grounds and north of the Amazon illustrates the species' dispersive capabilities, as already noted for other Rallidae (Remsen & Parker 1990). Should a resident population in French Guiana be confirmed, then this *Aramides* would no longer be a Brazilian endemic.

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Unusual offshore record of Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis* on Malpelo Island, Colombia, Eastern Tropical Pacific

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Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis* is a highly specialised predator that feeds primarily on freshwater snails of the genus *Pomacea*, but occasionally on other prey (i.e. *Marissa* snails, crayfish and freshwater crabs: Sykes *et al.* 1995). The species is widely distributed in wetlands from Florida to northern Argentina. Although Snail Kite is not considered a long-distance migrant, there are well-supported data concerning dispersal events on the Florida peninsula and between Florida and Cuba (Takekawa & Beissinger 1989, Angehr 1999). Furthermore, in many areas it has established new populations prior to significant changes in the ecological integrity of the wetlands and the appearance of *Pomacea*. Most ecological changes are related to pollution or other strong perturbations, which promote the presence of freshwaters snails that live in water highly saturated with organic loads (Angehr 1999, Estela & Naranjo 2005).

Malpelo Island is 1.6 km long, with a max. width of 700 m and max. altitude of 300 m, and lacks any permanent fresh water. The island lies *c.*380 km off the Pacific coast of Colombia, it is of volcanic origin and is almost completely devoid of plants (López-Victoria & Rozo 2006). Although species richness is low, the island harbours three endemic lizard species, one endemic land crab, and >80 other invertebrates, including two species of land snails (cf. Subulinidae and cf. Thysanophoridae). Seven seabird species breed and 53 other bird species have been recorded, some only as vagrants (López-Victoria & Estela 2007).

During a field trip to Malpelo on 13–17 February 2010, MLV & OK observed six Snail Kites (Fig. 1). They were positively identified by their red irides, white under- and uppertail-coverts, long slender and strongly decurved black bill, longish square tail, and orange-red legs and cere in males (Fig. 1b). The kites started flying around at 09.00 h daily, when air temperatures increased, and remained on or above the summit of the island most of the day. We climbed Malpelo's peaks on four occasions to photograph them and